SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER
San Francisco, California
July 26, 1962

A Cigaret Label Law?

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Next time you stop at the tobacco counter for a pack of cigarets, you won't find a skull and crossbones on the label.

Yet the jolly roger could well be among drastic governmental restrictions on cigarets that are "inevitable," two lung cancer experts declared yesterday.

The Government crackdown could come on cigaret advertising, or in new regulations requiring a label on every pack warning that cigarets can cause lung cancer.

NO JURISDICTION

But the tobacco industry lobby will have to be overcome to change the law, which ironically now does not have any jurisdiction over the effects of smoking on health.

These points were made yesterday by Dr. Alton Ochsner, New Orleans lung surgeon who has treated more lung cancer patients than any other man in the world, and James P. McArdle, Pittsburgh attorney who is prosecuting an historic lung cancer suit against the Liggett & Myers Tobacco Company.

DR. ALTON OCHSNER
...skull and crossbones on cigarette pack"

They were here for a press conference at the Towne-House and a public meeting last night at Civic Auditorium, presented by the International Temperance Association.

"If the tobacco companies were really sincere," said Doctor Ochsner, "they could give smokers a completely nioctine-free cigaret.

CAUSE OF HABIT

"But the nicotine causes the addiction. That would be like a dope peddler selling a 'fix' with all milk sugar, and leaving out the heroin.

"I think the Public Health Service is going to be forced to do something. Our government can't continue to ignore the problem when so many others are acting," he said.

Britain, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Holland and Italy have all cracked down severely on cigarets, Doctor Ochsner said.

Lung cancer, he said, is a "new disease," which began a meteoric rise in the 1930s, with just the right time lag to develop after men began to smoke in great numbers in 1914.

In a recent Florida case a jury found that a man died of cancer, and smoking caused it, but the tobacco firm was not liable because, Doctor Ochsner said, "at the time this evidence was not known."

In another case last month in Kansas City a federal court jury found the Philip Morris Co. was not liable for a throat cancer developed by a cigarette smoker.

Foreman of the jury said the 11 men and one woman agreed from the outset that neither they nor medical science could say with certainty what is the cause of cancer.

STANDARD TIMES
New Bedford, Mass.
June 7, 1962

Chest Expert Says Smoking Cuts Life Expectancy

If you are a smoker, chances are your life will be nine years shorter than the lives of your non-smoking friends, Dr. Richard H. Overholt, director of Overholt Thoracic Clinic in Boston, told more than 250 members of the New Bedford Tuberculosis and Health Association last night.

Dr. Overholt said smokers "find it necessary to consult doctors more often, require hospitalization with greater frequency and fail to respond to treatment of such diseases as bronchitis, tuberculosis, diabetes and heart trouble as promptly as non-smokers."

He said the smoker is the victim of a true drug addiction that causes "shortness of breath, wheezing, fatigue, dizziness or lightheadedness."

Dr. Overholt added that "the relationship of smoking to lung cancer has been established."

He explained that years of smoke inhalation cause a loss of absorptive membranes in the lungs that speeds up cancer. "Where the waste products leave the body, degenerative diseases and cancer are encountered more frequently in long-term inhalers than in non-smokers," he said.

Other Effects

Speaking at the association's annual meeting at the Lawler Library, Dr. Overholt pointed out the importance of the lungs to good health. He said, "Long-term smokers suffer from metabolic disease, stomach ulcers, circulatory troubles of the extremities and coronary artery disease by more than double the frequency faced by the non-smoker."

Dr. Overholt has practiced chest surgery in Boston more than 30 years and is clinical professor of surgery at Tufts Medical School. His principal hospital affiliations are the New England Deaconess Hospital and the New England Baptist Hospital in Boston. He is also consultant thoracic surgeon at Sassaquin Hospital, New Bedford.

Referring to the effort of cigaret manufacturers to reduce the nicotine and tar content of cigarets without detracting from the pleasure of smoking, Dr. Overholt said, "The smoker who shifts from regulars to filters actually, in most cases, increases the daily consumption of cigarets by the same percentage that the filter has extracted nicotine from each cigaret smoked."

The body of the long-term smoker requires a replenished supply for a feeling of well-being and the addiction is kept smoldering and satisfaction comes only by increasing the number of cigarets smoked with a filter, he said.

The filter was a wise choice financially for the tobacco industry because it has resulted in a higher consumption of cigarets by those who have continued to smoke, Dr. Overholt added.

Program Proposed

Proposing a four-point program for an effective reduction in tobacco use, he said:

1. "Persons of influence, such as teachers, ministers, doctors, athletic directors and movie and TV stars, should be persuaded to set a good example.

2. "Persons who control press, radio and TV should be informed of the impact of tobacco advertising upon the health and happiness of their audience.

3. "The jurisdiction of the tobacco traffic should be placed under the Pure Food and Drug Laws. National legislation should be so directed.

4. "Most important of all, there should be educational programs for young people who have not yet acquired the habit."

A business meeting of the Tuberculosis and Health Association preceded Dr. Overholt's speech, and an informal reception with the doctor followed.

Miss Isabel G. Fitzgerald, retired supervisor of public health nurses in the city for 38 years, was presented a citation by the Health Association in acknowledgement of her outstanding service to the community in the continuing fight against tuberculosis and respiratory diseases.

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